IN THE CLAIMS

1. (currently amended) An e-mail-enabled automation control module (ACM) system comprising:

an ACM; and

an e-mail system electrically connected to said ACM that is configured to automatically control at least one device without user intervention and that is coupled to a backplane, said e-mail system configured to perform at least one of sending e-mail messages from said ACM through a network, and receiving e-mail messages from the network.

2. (previously presented) An ACM system in accordance with Claim 1 wherein the e-mail messages include ACM data.

3. (previously presented) An ACM system in accordance with Claim 1 wherein the e-mail messages include ACM notifications.

4. (previously presented) An ACM system in accordance with Claim 1 wherein the e-mail messages include at least one of ACM data, and ACM notifications from at least one of another ACM and another device.

5. (previously presented) An ACM system in accordance with Claim 1 wherein said e-mail system comprises a network interface configured for connection to the network.

6. (previously presented) An ACM system in accordance with Claim 5 wherein said e-mail system comprises an e-mail client configured to send the e-mail messages through said network interface and the network.

7. (previously presented) An ACM system in accordance with Claim 1 wherein said e-mail system comprises an e-mail server configured to perform at least one of receive the e-mail messages from the network, transfer ACM data to and from said ACM, transfer ACM notifications to and from said ACM, and receive and respond to e-mail transfer requests from the network.

8. (previously presented) An ACM system in accordance with Claim 7 wherein said e-mail server comprises at least one mailbox configured to store at least one e-mail message, said e-mail server further configured to allow a user that is connected to said e-mail system through the network to perform at least one of read, modify, and delete the e-mail messages stored in said at least one mailbox.

9. (previously presented) An ACM system in accordance with Claim 1 wherein said ACM comprises an ACM central processing unit (CPU) and a CPU system memory, said CPU configured to execute ACM functions.

10. (previously presented) An ACM system in accordance with Claim 1 wherein said ACM comprises a backplane interface electrically connected to said ACM and said backplane electrically connected to said backplane interface, said backplane configured for connection with at least one of an input/output (I/O) module and an input module.

11. (previously presented) An ACM system in accordance with Claim 10 wherein said e-mail system electrically connected to said backplane.

12. (currently amended) A method for management and control of a first automation control module (ACM), the first ACM including an e-mail system electrically connected to the first ACM and a network, said method comprising:

sending e-mail messages from the first ACM through the network using the e-mail system;

receiving e-mail messages from the network using the e-mail system; and

requesting, by the first ACM, information via the e-mail system from a second ACM, wherein the first ACM automatically controls a device without user intervention and is coupled to a backplane.

13. (previously presented) A method in accordance with Claim 12 wherein the e-mail system comprises an e-mail client electrically connected to the first ACM and the network, and sending e-mail messages from the first ACM through the network using the e-

mail system comprising sending e-mail messages from the first ACM through the network using the e-mail client.

14. (previously presented) A method in accordance with Claim 13 wherein sending e-mail messages from the first ACM through the network using the e-mail client comprises sending ACM data from the first ACM through the network using the e-mail client.

15. (previously presented) A method in accordance with Claim 13 wherein sending e-mail messages from the first ACM through the network using the e-mail client comprises sending ACM notifications from the first ACM through the network using the e-mail client.

16. (previously presented) A method in accordance with Claim 13 wherein the e-mail system comprises an e-mail server electrically connected to the first ACM and the network, receiving e-mail messages from the network using the e-mail system comprising receiving e-mail messages from the network using the e-mail server.

17. (original) A method in accordance with Claim 16 wherein receiving e-mail messages from the network using the e-mail server comprising receiving ACM data from the network using the e-mail server.

18. (original) A method in accordance with Claim 16 wherein receiving e-mail messages from the network using the e-mail server comprising receiving ACM notifications from the network using the e-mail server.

19. (previously presented) A method in accordance with Claim 16 wherein receiving e-mail messages from the network using the e-mail server comprising transferring ACM data to and from the first ACM.

20. (previously presented) A method in accordance with Claim 16 wherein receiving e-mail messages from the network using the e-mail server comprising transferring ACM notifications to and from the first ACM.

21. (original) A method in accordance with Claim 16 wherein receiving e-mail messages from the network using the e-mail server comprising receiving and responding to e-mail transfer requests from the network.

22. (original) A method in accordance with Claim 16 further comprising:

granting a user on the network access to the e-mail server; and

allowing the user to perform at least one of read, modify, and delete the e-mail messages.

23. (currently amended) A method for management and control of an automation control module (ACM) using an ACM system, the ACM system including a first ACM, a network, a general purpose computer electrically connected to the network, and an e-mail subsystem electrically connected to the first ACM and the network, said method comprising:

sending e-mail messages from the first ACM through the network to the general purpose computer using the e-mail subsystem;

receiving e-mail messages from the general purpose computer through the network using the e-mail subsystem; and

requesting information via the e-mail subsystem from a second ACM, wherein said requesting information is performed by the first ACM that is configured to automatically control at least one device without user intervention and that is coupled to a backplane.

24. (previously presented) A method in accordance with Claim 23 wherein sending e-mail messages from the first ACM through the network to the general purpose computer using the e-mail subsystem comprises sending ACM data from the first ACM through the network to the general purpose computer using the e-mail subsystem.

25. (previously presented) A method in accordance with Claim 23 wherein sending e-mail messages from the first ACM through the network to the general purpose computer

using the e-mail subsystem comprises sending ACM notifications from the first ACM through the network to the general purpose computer using the e-mail subsystem.

26. (original) A method in accordance with Claim 23 wherein receiving e-mail messages from the general purpose computer through the network using the e-mail subsystem comprises receiving ACM data from the general purpose computer through the network using the e-mail subsystem.

27. (original) A method in accordance with Claim 23 wherein receiving e-mail messages from the general purpose computer through the network using the e-mail subsystem comprises receiving ACM notifications from the general purpose computer through the network using the e-mail subsystem.

28. (previously presented) A method in accordance with Claim 23 further comprising:

transferring ACM data to the first ACM from the e-mail subsystem; and

transferring ACM data to the e-mail subsystem from the first ACM.

29. (previously presented) A method in accordance with Claim 23 further comprising:

transferring ACM notifications to the first ACM from the e-mail subsystem; and

transferring ACM notifications to the e-mail subsystem from the first ACM.

30. (original) A method in accordance with Claim 23 wherein the system further comprises at least one other ACM electrically connected to the network, said method further comprising:

sending ACM data to the at least one other ACM through the network using the e-mail subsystem; and

receiving ACM data from the at least one other ACM through the network using the e-mail subsystem.

31. (original) A method in accordance with Claim 23 wherein the system further comprises at least one other ACM electrically connected to the network, said method further comprising:

sending ACM notifications to the at least one other ACM through the network using the e-mail subsystem; and

receiving ACM notifications from the at least one other ACM through the network using the e-mail subsystem.

32. (currently amended) An automation control module (ACM) system comprising:

an ACM;

a network;

a general purpose computer electrically connected to said network; and

an e-mail subsystem electrically connected to said network and said ACM, wherein said ACM is configured to automatically control at least one device without user intervention and is coupled to a backplane, said e-mail subsystem configured to perform at least one of sending e-mail messages from said ACM through said network to said general purpose computer and receiving e-mail messages from said general purpose computer through said network.

33. (original) A system in accordance with Claim 32 wherein said e-mail subsystem further configured to send ACM data from said ACM through said network to said general purpose computer.

34. (original) A system in accordance with Claim 32 wherein said e-mail subsystem further configured to send ACM notifications from said ACM through said network to said general purpose computer.

35. (original) A system in accordance with Claim 32 wherein said e-mail subsystem further configured to receive e-mail messages from said network.

36. (original) A system in accordance with Claim 33 wherein said e-mail subsystem further configured to transfer ACM data to and from said ACM.

37. (original) A system in accordance with Claim 33 wherein said e-mail subsystem further configured to transfer ACM notifications to and from said ACM.

38. (original) A system in accordance with Claim 33 wherein said e-mail subsystem further configured to receive and respond to e-mail transfer requests.

39. (original) A system in accordance with Claim 32 wherein said network is the Internet.

40. (original) A system in accordance with Claim 32 further comprising at least one other ACM electrically conne cted to the network, said e-mail subsystem further configured to:

send ACM data to said at least one other ACM through said network; and

receive ACM data from said at least one other ACM through said network.

41. (original) A system in accordance with Claim 32 further comprising at least one other ACM electrically connected to said network, said e-mail subsystem further configured to:

send ACM notifications to said at least one other ACM through said network; and

receive ACM notifications from said at least one other ACM through said network.

42. (original) A system in accordance with Claim 32 further comprising at least one other device electrically connected to said network, said e-mail subsystem further configured to:

send e-mail messages to said at least one other device through said network; and

receive e-mail messages from said at least one other device through said network.

43. (original) An ACM system in accordance with Claim 32 wherein said e-mail subsystem embedded within said ACM.

44. (previously presented) An ACM system in accordance with Claim 32 further comprising a backplane interface electrically connected to said ACM and said backplane electrically connected to said backplane interface, said backplane configured for connection with at least one of an input/output (I/O) module and an input module.

45. (original) An ACM system in accordance with Claim 44 wherein said backplane interface embedded within said ACM.

46. (original) An ACM system in accordance with Claim 44 wherein said e-mail subsystem electrically connected to said backplane.

47. (previously presented) An ACM system in accordance with Claim 1 wherein the at least one device is separate from said ACM.

48. (previously presented) An ACM system in accordance with Claim 1 wherein the at least one device is coupled to said ACM via the backplane.

49. (previously presented) An ACM system in accordance with Claim 1 wherein the at least one device is coupled to said ACM via the backplane and via an input/output module.

50. (previously presented) An ACM system in accordance with Claim 1 wherein the at least one device is coupled to said ACM via the backplane, and the backplane is separate from said ACM.